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THE YEAR IN HOME ECONOMICS

A radio talk by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, broadcast Thursday, December 29, 1938, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Program, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 93 associate stations.

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WALLACE KADDERLY: This being Thursday, it's time again to hear from the Bureau of Home Economics. And as some of our regular listeners are probably recalling, the Bureau of Home Economics generally takes this last Thursday of the year as the time to review, very briefly, some of its outstanding research projects. Dr. Louise Stanley, Chief of the Bureau, has come over several times and given you this report herself. But she can't be here today. So she's asked Ruth Van Deman to be the spokesman for the Bureau again this week and give you the final summing-up report for 1938.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

ItIs a grand assignment Dr. Stanley's given me. But It's a good stiff one. I find that reporting on a research program is something like keeping house. There's no end to it. No place you can stop and call quits, and feel that you finished the job.

So I'm not going to try to cover thw whole year's work in a few minutes. I'm just going to give some of the background on a few of the more technical pieces of research -- ones that I don't think I've spoken about on the weekly broadcasts.

First, an exceedingly interesting study on the relation of Vitamin A in the daily diet and the ability of a person's eyes to adjust quickly from bright to dim light. Probably you've seen reports in the newspapers lately about so-called "night-blindness" as a possible cause of automobile accidents. I believe, Wallace, you had a word to say about that the other day.

KADDERLY:

Yes, I did just mention it. But a story like that has so many angles, it's always news. Go right ahead.

VAN DEMAN:

Some time ago nutrition experts began to suspect that this condition of the eyes, this failure to see as well as one should at night, might be due to lack of enough Vitamin A in the diet. And to get definite proof of that and to find out exactly how many units of Vitamin A a normal person needs, Dr. Lela Booher, the head of our nutrition work, planned a very unusual series of experiments. Elizabeth Callison and Elizabeth Hewston were her assistants. And as experimentees five others -- two men and three women employed in our Bureau -- volunteered to go on a low Vitamin A diet for 2, 3, 6, or as many weeks as were necessary to get clear-cut results. That is, the food they ate had plenty of calories, protein, everything but Vitamin A.

They also agreed to have their eyes tested every day with a scientific instrument called a visual adaptometer. This is an apparatus with

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lights that can be flashed on all the way from very bright to dim. By means of these lights it's possible to measure the degree to which a person is night blind.

And each of these persons on the experiment had daily tests with another instrument to find whether the range of vision on the side is as wide as it should be, or whether it's narrowed down to such a point that a person might as well be wearing blinders like the horses that shy at things at things along the side of the road.

When each of these persons eating three meals a day deficient in Vitamin A had developed a definite case of night-blindness and the vision was narrowed down, then they were given once a day a certain amount of Vitamin A in the form of a codliver oil concentrate. This concentrate was used, because the nutrition people knew exactly how many international units of Vitamin A each drop of it contained. In that way they were able to find how much Vitamin A each of these five men and women needed to bring their vision back to normal.

Very roughly, that was the plan of the experiment. I won't go into the detailed results except to say that Dr. Booher found that a moderately active person weighing 132 pounds should have a least 3600 international units of Vitamin A every day.

And like all the rest of the vitamin specialists, Dr. Booher believes that we should get our Vitamin A from butter and eggs, and fruits and vegetables, and liver, and other foods on the regular menu.

So much for this one of the nutrition projects.

The textile people have also done some pioneering in their field. They've moved up another notch in their work toward better labels on fabrics -- labels that tell a person before she buys what service she can reasonably expect from a piece of goods.

Many of you, I know, have the buying guides for sheets, and blankets, and bath towels. One young homemaker tells me she never dreamed there were so many things to know about a both towel until she read that bulletin.

The new piece of research completed in 1938 was on upholstery fabrics. Bess Viemont Morrison and Margaret Hays ran tests on 62 pieces of upholstery material. Their aim, and they certainly accomplished it, was to get facts about the strength and amount of rubbing these upholstery materials would stand. And whether the colors were fast under standard light tests.

The price of these materials ran from 69 cents to $4.90 a yard, In the collection were brocades, friezes, damasks, velvets, rib weaves -- all the usual kinds of upholstery materials that furniture makers are putting on chairs and sofas.

Again I am not going to go into the details of the results. The distinct achievement was that from the figures Mrs. Morrison and Miss Hays gathered they were able to work out a possible system of grading upholstery material of different kinds. And it's very encouraging to them that retail-

ers and manufacturers are studying this system they've suggested with a view to putting more informative labels on their goods.

Then that project looking toward a new and better system of sizing children's clothes. We're glad to report that most of the spake work is done on that job. Ruth O'Brien who's heading that up has had such wonderful cooperation from schools and home economics people in the States that over a hundred thousand children have been measured. Youngsters from 4 to 14 years old, whose parents were willing, have stood still long enough to let trained people take 36 measurements on each boy and each girl.

The analysis of these figures is in the final stages. Long before December comes around again, we expect to have that report in circulation. It will furnish a new basis for making clothes to fit modern American children.

We all know how impossible the present system is of sizing children's clothes according to age. Right now the stores are probably acutely aware of that, having to exchange the Christmas sweaters and dresses that trusting aunts and cousins bought thinking that if the age mark was right, of course the garment would fit the child.

Even now, before the figures from this new study are all completely analyzed, we can see that age is about the poorest possible basis for sizing children's garments.

Well, when this new report is out there'll be real measurement of 100,000 real live American youngsters to go on. That will be something the garment trade had never had before.

And there, Wallace, I guess we'll have to leave it for this year.

KADDERLY:

Not quite. We hope you'll come over tomorrow and tell us more about the Bureau of Home Economics plans for 1939.

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